

# Panamá



## CHAPTER X.

PANAMA, VIEJO OR OLD PANAMA—SITE—GLIMPSE OF PAST HISTORY—DESTRUCTION BY MORGAN—RUINS—CATHEDRAL OF ST. ANASTASIUS—PRESENT CONDITION.

OLD PANAMA, or *Panama Viejo*, is a most interesting spot to any one who has unearthed some of the early history of the Spanish discoverers. The ruins of the old city lie some four and a half miles southeast of modern Panama. The only landmark seen by shipmasters making the harbor is the old tower of the Cathedral of St. Anastasius.

The old city is difficult to reach. To go there on horseback during the dry season, means a long ride from Panama by way of the savanna, thence through a very dense forest, amid tropical jungle. During a ride of that kind, in the dry season, one will probably be cover by garrapatas, or wood-ticks, and they are not pleasant. The best way of getting there is by water. Such trips have to be nicely timed, owing to the great rise and fall of the tides, and no one should attempt it unless he has skilled boatmen. Huge rollers form all along the upper horn of the gulf and are very dangerous. My first visit with my family nearly resulted in our being drowned. The boatman who undertook to take us there, claimed that he had a perfect knowledge of the locality and of a safe way of approaching it. As we were reaching the shores the crest of a huge roller partially filled our boat. Had we been swamped, the undertow, which at that point is very strong, would have carried us out to sea. Since then I have visited the spot, and the only boatman that I know of, that I would trust myself with is Marel, who lives at the Taller. He is a waterman of the first order, and with

him I never felt any anxiety, nor have I suffered the slightest mishap. Landing opposite the ruins is out of the question, owing to the sand and a very deep deposit of soft clay. Generally Marel entered one of the minor bays at some point between Puerta Paitillia and old Panama. He so arranged matters that we arrived there almost at high water, and we went out on the next tide. Between tides our boat was high and dry, and fully half a mile from the sea. After landing one wanders along a stretch of beach backed by dense tropical jungle, volcanic cliffs, and much that interests one who cares for things of that sort. An arm of the sea crosses the sands and passes under an old bridge into an interior lagoon. That old stone bridge possessed a wonderful interest for me. It was built some three hundred and fifty years ago, and to this very day, despite climate and earthquakes, it is in excellent order. At water level, where the faces of the stone are alternately wetted and sunned between tides, they have been worn away some three or four inches. Despite the latter, the bridge is strong and perfect; its arch is an exceedingly pretty one, and looking at it from the sands, it makes a beautiful picture, with the dense virgin forest and the water that one sees under and beyond it.

On one occasion while on a small picnic party, we had our early coffee on that bridge, under a huge tree that had grown on the arch. During my last visit to old Panama, I found that that stalwart guardian had been uprooted and blown into the lagoon.

The bridge and the remains of the porter's residence beyond it were wonderfully suggestive to me. It connected old Panama on the Pacific with Porto Bello, or Beautiful Harbor on the Atlantic. The latter was so named by Columbus in person.\* The early Spaniards built a paved way from Porto Bello across the mountains to the Panama side. There it connected with the main road, crossing a part of the savanna, and by way of the bridge, with Panama Viejo. Then Spain was at the

---

\* "Life and Voyages of Columbus."

very zenith of her fame and wealth, and in Old Panama the splendor of the mother country was reproduced. With the pearls of the islands, the gold from Darien and the coast of Central America, and the silver of Mexico and Peru it was rich to a degree. It was a life of luxury, of Spanish pleasure and dash, almost Asiatic in character. The Vice-Regal Court was grand and imposing; proud and brave noblemen surrounded the Viceroy, who was kingly, both in power and surroundings. People those highways with richly dressed noblemen attending Spanish women, whose beauty is historic, mounted on their Andalusian chargers, and attended by a suite of followers. The very atmosphere down there seemed to teem with the music of old time bells. Remember Spain and the church went hand in hand,—to be strictly accurate, the Church led and Spain followed. To-day not a house remains intact. That city, then considered the Key to the Pacific and the Gate to the Universe, is silent and overgrown by a dense tropical forest, over two hundred years old.

I have used the term "Asiatic luxury," translating literally from the Spanish—*lujo Asiatico*. As some of my readers may not be thoroughly versed in that most romantic and daring age, it may be well to recall the fact that the brilliant discoveries of Columbus and his daring followers came close on the expulsion of the Moors from Spain. The latter had overrun that country for nearly eight hundred years, and they have left some of the grandest of architectural monuments: not only in Spain, but in Portugal as well. The true Asiatic luxury was that introduced by the Moors. Anyone who has had the privilege of visiting Spain and seeing some of those wonderful creations of the Moors, such as the Alcazar of Seville, will not question my statement as to Asiatic luxury. The Moors were a people who grafted on Spain luxurious habits and their own pomp. Following their expulsion, hundreds and thousands of warriors who had been trained to arms were idle, and they gladly embarked in the vessels of the discoverer to seek fame and wealth beyond the "dark sea," as the early histo-

rians termed the Atlantic. I have referred to the discovery of the Pacific on the morning of the 26th of September, 1513, by Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, who saw it from the top of El Cerro Gigante, midway between Panama and Colon. Following this discovery, new and vast fields were opened to these ambitious, daring adventurers. In time Old Panama was built and there was a luxuriance and an ostentation about it that to-day I presume is unknown,—certainly within the domain of civilization. So much by way of explanation. The history of that wonderful old city reads to me like one of Jules Verne's stories, save that the ruins are there, and we have history for it instead of fiction. Many of the houses were of stone, and some of their foundations can be traced to this day, and in some places their side walls; but the majority were of native cedar, a densely hard, aromatic wood. Among thousands of other buildings there were churches, and no less than eight monasteries and a magnificent hospital. The churches and monasteries were wealthy to a degree; it was always the church first and Spain afterwards. Their fittings, altar cloths, jewel services, and altar paraphernalia were mines of wealth; so much so that the fame thereof spread over the world. In time this very luxury led to the destruction of the city by the buccaneers. In the city there were over two thousand houses of stately appearance inhabited by the king's officers and the wealthy class. It is said that there were five thousand of more modest pretention, occupied by small tradesmen and the lower classes. There were buildings allotted to the keeping of the king's horses,—horses that were kept purposely to convey the king's treasure over the paved way to Porto Bello on the Atlantic, or the North Sea, as they then termed it, there to deposit it ere it was conveyed to the mother country in the king's vessels. The houses of the better class were filled with silken hangings, paintings and all that luxury and a fastidious taste could desire.

The beautiful savanna, that I have briefly alluded to in the past, then consisted of fertile fields and magnifi-

cent drives. The life was a dreamy one of sensuous luxury for the upper class. Everything they touched seemed to turn into gold. The unfortunate natives of the country were their slaves. The islands in the gulf yielded magnificent pearls, the mines of Darien gave untold wealth. While sitting there amid the old ruins in the heart of a dense forest, it almost seemed unreal that the place was the site of so much past grandeur and past luxury. Nature with her own lavish hand has done her best to bury the ruins in a luxurious growth; even the very walls of the few remaining buildings are clad with tropical creepers, and from their upper portion there is a dense growth of small trees. These lines of pure green, in what seems nothing but a mass of forest, produce a very strange effect. I have wandered about on the site of that old city, following a machetero or a native with a machete. He preceded me to cut a trail. In the forest there is a wealth of tropical vegetation and flowers, with but an occasional glimpse of sunlight, so dense is the foliage. All is quiet save when broken by the blows of the machetero or the singing of innumerable tropical birds. In wandering about through the forest, one has to be exceedingly careful, owing to the number of old wells which supplied the inhabitants with their water. Many of these are in excellent order. They are just on a level with the surrounding ground, are of great depth, and contain an abundance of water. It was customary to sink a well between walls, enabling people in two houses to supply themselves from the same source. The ruins of the old Cathedral of St. Anastasius are those that afford one the most satisfaction, as they are still in good condition. There it was on the altar of the Virgin, that bold and indefatigable discoverer, Pizarro, deposited his votive offering before sailing to the south, where he discovered Peru. He found a people whose history was classic. The Peruvians, whose monuments are familiar to all readers of history, were a people who upwards of one thousand years ago constructed a road from what is to-day Santa Fé de Bogota, to the country of the first Incas. This road was a marvel

of engineering. For hundreds and hundreds of miles it was constructed through ravines, across mountain gorges, and even around the faces of cliffs. Within the walls of the old cathedral there is a growth of timber, for it is over two centuries since Old Panama was laid waste.

Once while making a diligent search in the forests, I found the walls of an old ecclesiastical building, and, over an archway, a huge coat-of-arms. It had been almost obliterated by time. The difficulty of getting about there is great, and the danger from poisonous snakes is serious. There is no spot that has furnished me with so much agreeable food for thought and speculation as Old Panama. It is impossible to read the early history of the Spaniards without feeling a warm glow creeping over one—an intense admiration for the men who fought against climate, savages, and disease.

It has been my good fortune to pay four visits to Old Panama. Its sole sentinel is the tower of St. Anastasius. There is much of the history of that time that seems to be comparatively unknown, even to well informed people, and yet reading it gives one profound pleasure.

Henry Morgan's history reads like a novel. "Brave and daring \* \* \* of a sordid and brutal character, selfish and cunning, and without any spark of the reckless generosity which sometimes graced the freebooter and contrasted with his crimes. He was a native of Wales, and the son of a respectable yeoman. Early inclination led him to the sea; and embarking for Barbadoes, by a fate common to all unprotected adventurers, he was sold for a term of years. After effecting his escape, or emancipation, Morgan joined the buccaneers, and in a short time saved a little money, with which, in concert with a few comrades, he equipped a bark, of which he was chosen commander." \* \* \*

Such was the start made by the new leader of the buccaneers. After endless adventures he organized an expedition for an attack on Porto Bello, or the Atlantic

---

\* *Lives and Voyages of Drake, Cavendish et al.*, New York.

port of Panama. "With nine ships and boats, and 460 of his countrymen, he resolved to assault Porto Bello."\* This expedition exhibits the hardy daring of this man, for Porto Bello was a stronghold of the first order. "To those who then objected that their force was inadequate to the attack, Morgan boldly replied that though their numbers were small, their hearts were good; and the fewer the warriors the larger the shares of plunder. This was an irresistible argument; and this strongly fortified city was carried by a handful of resolute men, who never scrupled at cruelty needful to the accomplishment of their object, and often revelled in the wantonness of unnecessary crime."\*

The Spaniards fought bravely against the English pirates. The wealthy inhabitants sought safety with their valuables and treasure within the forts. One strong fort had been reduced, for Morgan had compelled his prisoners to place scaling ladders on the walls. Priests and nuns were forced to do the work, Morgan believing that the Spaniards would spare them and that under such cover his men could advance. "In these trying circumstances, forgetting the claims of country, and the sacred character of the innocent persons exposed to suffering so unmerited, the Spanish Governor consulted only his official duty; and while the unhappy prisoners of the buccaneers implored his mercy, continued to pour shot upon all who approached the walls, whether pirates or the late peaceful inhabitants of the cloisters, his stern answer being that he would never surrender alive. Many of the friars and nuns were killed before the scaling ladders could be fixed; but that done, the buccaneers, carrying with them fireballs and pots full of gunpowder, boldly mounted the walls, poured in their combustibles, and speedily effected an entrance. All the Spaniards demanded quarter except the Governor, who died fighting, in the presence of his wife and daughter, declaring that he chose rather to die as a

---

\* Ibidem.

brave soldier than be hanged like a coward. The next act in the horrid drama of buccaneering conquest followed rapidly,—pillage, cruelty, brutal license,—the freebooters giving themselves up to so mad a course of riot and debauchery that fifty resolute men might have cut them off and regained the town, had the panic-struck Spaniards been able to form any rational plan of action or to muster a force. During these fifteen days of demoniac revel, interrupted only by torturing the prisoners to make them give up treasures which they did not possess, many of the buccaneers died from the consequences of their own brutal excesses, and Morgan deemed it expedient to draw off his force. Information had by this time reached the Governor of Panama and though aid was distant from the miserable inhabitants of Porto Bello, it might still come. Morgan, therefore, carried off a good many of the guns, spiked the rest, fully supplied his ships with every necessary store, and having already plundered all that was possible, insolently demanded an exorbitant ransom for the preservation of the city and for his prisoners, and prepared to depart from the coast. These terms he even sent to the Governor of Panama, who was approaching the place, and whose force the buccaneers intercepted in a narrow pass, and compelled to retreat. The inhabitants collected among themselves a hundred thousand pieces of eight, which Morgan graciously accepted, and retired to his ships.

“The astonishment of the Governor of Panama at so small a force carrying the town and the forts, and holding them so long, induced him, it is said, to send a message to the buccaneer leader, requesting a specimen of the arms which he used. Morgan received the messenger with civility, gave him a pistol and a few bullets, and ordered him to bid the governor to accept of so slender a pattern of the weapons with which he had taken Porto Bello, and to keep it for a twelvemonth, at the end of which time he (Morgan) proposed to come to Panama to fetch it away. The Governor returned the loan with a gold ring, and requesting Morgan not to



give himself the trouble of travelling so far, certifying to him that he would not fare so well as he had done at Porto Bello."

Following this exploit Morgan led many successful expeditions, and "early in October, 1670, found himself surrounded by pirates, hunters, cultivators, English, French and Dutch, who, from land and sea, the plantation and the wilderness, had flocked to the standard of him who was to lead them to fortune and victory. The first duty was to victual the fleet, and this was done by pillaging the hog-yards, and with the *boucan* sent in by hunters who either joined in the expedition or traded with the pirates."

The word buccaneer is derived from *boucan*, the French for smoke. The men who cured the bacon for the pirates, and who really were their allies, were called "boucaniers." In time this word became converted into our English word "buccaneer," and later it gave the name to the whole bloodthirsty piratical crew. Morgan's success in organization may be gathered from the fact, that at that time he had thirty-seven vessels, fully provisioned, under his command, and 2,000 fighting men, flushed with victory, eager for plunder and the grossest license. Then it was that a new attack on Porto Bello was in order, and, following its capitulation, it was to be, "On to Panama," to redeem his promise and recover his pistol. The remainder is best told in the admirable words of the old time chronicler:

"From this point Morgan detached a force of 400 men, to attack the castle of Chagre, the possession of which he judged necessary to the success of his future operations against Panama. It was eventually carried by the accident of fire communicating with the powder magazine, which blew up part of the defences.\*

---

\* The manner in which the fire was said to be communicated is not a little singular. A buccaneer was pierced through by an arrow from the fort. He drew it forth from his body, wound a little cotton round it, and shot it from his musket against the castle. The cotton kindled by the powder, set fire to the palm-leaf roofs of some sheds within the

"While the Spaniards were occupied in suppressing the conflagration, the buccaneers labored hard to increase the confusion, by setting fire to the palisadoes in several places. At last they effected a breach, in defiance of the liquid combustibles which the Spaniards poured down among them, and which occasioned considerable loss of their numbers. But the attack and resistance were still continued throughout the whole night, the buccaneers directing an incessant fire towards the breaches, which the Spanish Governor pertinaciously defended.

"By noon the next day, the buccaneers had gained a breach, which was defended by the Governor himself and twenty-five soldiers. The Spanish soldiers fought with desperate valor, despair lending them supernatural courage; but nothing could resist the impetuosity of the pirates; they burst their way through every obstacle, and the unfortunate Spaniards who survived, preferring death to the dishonor of either falling into the hands of these infuriated ruffians or of begging quarter, precipitated themselves into the sea. The Governor had retired into the *corps du garde*, before which he planted two pieces of cannon, and bravely maintained the hopeless and unequal conflict till he fell by a musket shot, which entered the brain. Of the garrison of 314 men, only thirty remained alive, and of these few twenty were wounded. Not a single officer escaped.

"From the survivors of the siege, the buccaneer party learned that the Governor of Panama was already apprised of their design against that place, that all along the course of the Chagre, ambuscades were laid, and that a force of 3,600 men awaited their arrival. But this did not deter Morgan, who pressed forward for Chagre the instant that he received intelligence of the capture of

---

castle, and the flame caught at the gunpowder, which produced the breach in the walls. At the same instant, the buccaneers set fire to the palisadoes; the Spaniards, though unwavering in courage, and undaunted in resolution, became distracted in the midst of so many dangers.

the castle, carrying with him all the provisions that could be obtained in Santa Catalina, to which island he intended to return after the capture of Panama.

"The English colors flying upon the castle of Chagre, was a sight of joy to the main body of the buccaneers upon their arrival. Morgan was admitted within the fort by the triumphant advance troop with all the honors of conquest. Before his arrival, the wounded, the widows of the soldiers killed in the siege, and the other women of the place, had been shut up in the church, and subjected to the most brutal treatment. To their fate Morgan was entirely callous; but he lost no time in setting the prisoners to work in repairing the defences and forming new palisades; he also seized all the craft in the river, many of which carried from two to four small pieces.

"These arrangements concluded, Morgan left a garrison of 500 men in his castle at Chagre, and in the ships 150; while at the head of 1,200 buccaneers, he, on the 18th of January, 1671, commenced his inland journey to Panama, indifferent about or determined to brave the Spanish ambuscades. His artillery was carried by five large boats, and thirty-two canoes were filled with part of the men. Anxious to push forward, Morgan committed one capital blunder in carrying almost no provisions, calculating upon a shorter period being consumed on the march than it actually required, and on foraging upon the Spaniards. Even on the first day their provisions failed, and on the second they were compelled to leave the canoes, the lowness of the river and the fallen trees lying across it making this mode of travelling tedious and nearly impractical. Their progress was now continued by land and water alternately, and was attended with great inconvenience, the extremity of famine being of the number of their hardships. Their best hopes were now placed in falling in with the threatened ambuscades, as there they might find a store of provisions. So extremely were they pinched with hunger that the leathern bags found at a deserted Spanish station formed a delicious meal. About this delicacy they

even quarrelled, and, it is said, openly regretted that no Spaniards were found, as failing provisions, they had resolved to have roasted or boiled a few of the enemy to satisfy their ravening appetites.

"Throughout the whole track to Panama the Spaniards had taken care not to leave the smallest quantity of provisions, and any other soldiers than the buccaneers must have perished long before even the distant view was obtained of the city, but their powers of endurance, from their hardy modes of life, were become almost superhuman. At nightfall, when they reached their halting-place, 'happy was he who had reserved since morn any small piece of leather whereof to make his supper, drinking after it a good draught of water for his greatest comfort.' Their mode of preparing this tough meal deserves to be noticed. The skins were first sliced, then alternately dipped in water and beat between two stones to render them tender; lastly, the remaining hair was scraped off, and the morsel broiled, cut into small bits, and deliberately chewed, with frequent mouthfuls of water to eke out and lengthen the repast.

"On the fifth day at another deserted ambushade a little maize was found, and also some wheat, wine, and plantains. This, scanty as it was, proved a seasonable supply to those who drooped, and it was thriftily dealt out among them. Next day a barnful of maize was discovered, which, beating down the door, the famished buccaneers rushed upon and devoured without any preparation. Yet all this hardship could not turn them aside from the scent of prey, though symptoms of discontent became visible in their ranks. At a village called Cruz, perceiving from a distance a great smoke, they joyfully promised themselves rest and refreshment, but on reaching it found no inhabitant, and every house either burnt down or in flames, so determined were the Spaniards to oppose the onward march of the terrible beings, presented to their imaginations under every shape of horror. The only animals remaining, the dogs and cats of the village, fell an immediate sacrifice to the wolfish hunger of the buccaneers.

"Morgan had now some difficulty in preserving discipline, and in keeping his companions or followers from falling into the hands of the Spaniards or Indians, when straggling about in search of anything they could devour. In this way one man was lost.

"They were now within eight leagues of Panama, and the nearer they approached the more anxious and vigilant was Morgan in looking out for the threatened ambuscades of the enemy, who, he naturally conjectured, might have retired to consolidate his forces. On the eighth day they were surprised by a shower of Indian arrows poured upon them from some unseen quarter, and, advancing into the woods, maintained a sharp, short contest with a party of Indians, many of whom fell offering a brave though vain resistance. Ten of the freebooters were killed in this skirmish. The buccaneers, who had already three Indian guides, runaways, found in Santa Catalina, endeavored at this place to make some prisoners for the purpose of procuring intelligence, but the Indians were too swift of foot.

"After another twenty-four hours of suffering, under which only freebooters or Indians could have borne up, on the morning of the ninth day of the march, from a high mountain the majestic South Sea was joyfully descried, with ships and boats sailing upon its bosom, and peacefully setting out from the concealed port of Panama. Herds of cattle, horses and asses, feeding in the valley below the eminence on which they stood, formed a sight not less welcome. They rushed to the feast, and, cutting up the animals, devoured their flesh half-raw, more resembling cannibals than Europeans at this banquet, the blood many times running down from their beards unto the middle of their bodies.

"This savage meal being ended, the journey was resumed, Morgan still endeavoring to gain information by taking prisoners, as on his whole line of march he had obtained speech of neither Spaniard or Indian.

"In the same evening the steeple of Panama was beheld at a distance, and, forgetting all their sufferings, the buccaneers gave way to the most rapturous exultation,

tossing their caps into the air, leaping, shouting, beating their drums, and sounding their trumpets at the sight of so glorious a plunder, and as if victory were already consummated. They encamped for the night near the city, intending to make the assault early in the morning. The same night a party of fifty Spanish horsemen came out as if to reconnoitre, advanced within musket shot of the pirates, scornfully challenged 'the dogs' to come on, and then retired, leaving six or eight of their number to watch the enemy's motions. Upon this the great guns of the town began to play on the camp, but were too distant or ill-directed to do any execution, and instead of betraying alarm, the buccaneers, having placed sentinels around their camps, made another voracious meal preparatory to the next day's business, threw themselves upon the grass, and, lulled by the Spanish artillery, slept soundly till the dawn.

"The camp was astir betimes, and the men being mustered and arrayed, with drums and trumpets sounding, they advanced towards the city; but instead of taking the ordinary route which the Spaniards were prepared to defend, by the advice of one of the Indian guides, they struck through a wood by a tangled and difficult path, in which, however, immediate obstruction could not be apprehended. Before the Spaniards could counteract this unexpected movement, the buccaneers had advanced some way. The Governor of Panama, who led the forces, commanded 200 cavalry and four regiments of infantry; and a number of Indian auxiliaries conducted an immense herd of wild bulls to be driven among the ranks of the buccaneers, and which were expected to throw them into disorder. This extraordinary arm of war was viewed by the hunters of Hispaniola and Campeachy with indifference, but they were somewhat alarmed at the regular and imposing array of the troops drawn up to receive them. It was, however, too late to retreat. They divided into three detachments, 200 dextrous marksmen leading the advance. They now stood on the top of a little eminence, whence the whole Spanish force, the city, and the champaign-

country around were distinctly seen. As they moved downward the Spanish Cavalry, shouting *Viva el Rey*, immediately advanced to meet them, but the ground happened to be soft and marshy, which greatly obstructed the manœuvres of the horsemen. The advance of the buccaneers, all picked marksmen, knelt and received them with a volley, and the conflict instantly became close and hot. The buccaneers, throwing themselves between the Spanish horse and foot, succeeded in separating them, and the wild bulls, taking fright from the tumult and the noise of the guns, ran away, or were shot by the buccaneers before they could effect any mischief.

"After a contest of two hours the Spanish cavalry gave way. Many were killed, and the rest fled; which the foot-soldiers perceiving, fired their last charge, threw down their muskets, and followed the example of the cavaliers. Some of them took refuge in the adjoining thickets; and though the buccaneers did not continue the pursuit, they took a savage pleasure in shooting without mercy all who accidentally fell into their hands. In this way several priests and friars who were made prisoners were pistolled by the orders of Morgan. A Spanish officer who was made prisoner gave the buccaneers minute intelligence of the force of the enemy and the plan of defence, which enabled them to approach the town from the safest point; but the advance was still attended with difficulty.

"After the rout which had taken place in the open field, and the slaughter which followed, the buccaneers rested for a little space, and during this pause, solemnly plighted their honor by oaths to each other, never to yield while a single man remained alive. This done, carrying their prisoners with them, they advanced upon the great guns planted in the streets and the hasty defences thrown up to repel them. In this renewed assault, the buccaneers suffered severely before they could make good those close quarters in which they ever maintained a decided superiority in fighting. Still, they resolutely advanced to the final grapple, the Spaniards

keeping up an incessant fire. The town was gained after a desperate conflict of three hours maintained in its open streets.

"In this assault the buccaneers neither gave nor accepted quarter, and the carnage on both sides was great. Six hundred Spaniards fell on that day, nor was the number of the buccaneers who perished much less; but to those who survived a double share of plunder was at all times ample consolation for the loss of companions whose services were no longer required in its acquisition. The city was no sooner gained than Morgan, who saw the temper of the inhabitants in the obstinate nature of the resistance they had offered, and who well knew the besetting sins of his followers, prudently prohibited them from tasting wine, and aware that such an order would be very little regarded, were it enforced by nothing save a simple command, he affirmed that he had received private intelligence that all the wine had been poisoned. They were therefore enjoined not to touch it, under the dread of poisoning and the penalties of discipline. Neither of these motives were sufficient to enforce rigid abstinence among the buccaneers, though they operated till indulgence became more safe.

"As soon as possession of the city was gained, guards were placed, and at the same time fires broke out simultaneously in different quarters, which were attributed by the Spaniards to the pirates, and by them to the inhabitants. Both assisted in endeavoring to extinguish the dreadful conflagration, which raged with fury; but the houses, being built of cedar, caught the flames like tinder, and were consumed in a very short time. The inhabitants had previously removed or concealed the most valuable part of their goods and furniture.

"The city of Panama consisted of about twelve thousand houses, many of them large and magnificent. It contained also eight monasteries and two churches, all richly furnished. The concealment of the church plate drew upon the ecclesiastics the peculiar vengeance of the heretical buccaneers, who, however, spared no one. The conflagration which they could not arrest, they seemed



at last to take a savage delight in spreading. A slave factory belonging to the Genoese, was burnt to the ground, together with many warehouses stored with meal. Many of the miserable Africans whom the Genoese brought for sale to Peru, perished in the flames which raged or smouldered for nearly four weeks.

"For some time the buccaneers, afraid of being surprised and overpowered by the Spaniards, who still reckoned ten for one of their numbers, encamped without the town. Morgan had also weakened his force by sending a hundred and fifty men back to Chagre, with news of his victory. Yet by this handful of men, the panic-struck Spaniards were held in check and subjection while the buccaneers either raged like demons through the burning town, or prowled among the ruins and ashes in search of plate and other valuable articles.

"The property which the Spaniards had concealed in deep wells and cisterns, was nearly all discovered, and the most active of the buccaneers were sent out to the woods and heights to search for and drive back the miserable inhabitants who had fled from the city with their effects. In two days they brought in about two hundred of the fugitives as prisoners. Of those unhappy persons many were females who found the merciless buccaneers no better than their fears had painted them.\*

"In plundering the land Morgan had not neglected the sea. By sea, many of the principal inhabitants had

---

\* "The Spanish colonists of South America had a twofold reason for detesting the buccaneers. They were English heretics as well as lawless miscreants, capable of the foulest crimes; and it is not easy to say whether in the idea of the indolent, uninstructed, priest-ridden inhabitants of Panama, Porto Bello, and Carthagena, they were not as hateful and alarming in the first character as in the last. A Spanish lady, one of his prisoners, with whom Morgan, the buccaneer commander, fell in love, is described as believing, till she saw them, that the freebooters were not men, but some sort of monsters named heretics, 'who did neither invoke the Blessed Trinity, nor believe in Jesus Christ.' The civilities of Captain Morgan inclined her to better thoughts of his faith and Christianity, especially as she heard him frequently swear by the sacred names. 'Neither did she now think them to be so bad, or to have the shapes of beasts, as from the relations

escaped, and the boat was immediately sent in pursuit, which brought in three prizes; though a galleon, in which was embarked all the plate and jewels belonging to the king of Spain, and the wealth of the principal nunnery of the town, escaped, from the buccaneers indulging in a brutal revel in their own bark till it was too late to follow and capture the ship. The pursuit was afterwards continued for four days, at the end of which the buccaneers returned to Panama with another prize, worth 20,000 pieces of eight in goods from Paita.

"Meanwhile, on the opposite coast, the ships' companies left at Chagre, were exercising their vocation, and had captured one large Spanish vessel, which, unaware of the hands into which the castle had fallen, ran in under it for protection. While the buccaneers were thus employed at sea, and at Panama and Chagre, parties continued to scour the surrounding country, taking in turn the congenial duty of foraging and bringing in booty and prisoners, on whom they exercised the most atrocious cruelties, unscrupulously employing the rack, and sparing neither age, sex, nor condition. Religious persons were the subjects of the most refined barbarity, as they were believed to direct and influence the rest of the inhabitants, both in their first resistance and in the subsequent concealment of property. During the perpetration of these outrages, Morgan, as has been noticed, fell in love with a beautiful Spanish woman, his

---

of several people, she had heard oftentimes. For as to the name of robbers or thieves which was commonly given them by others, she wondered not much at it, seeing, as she said, that among all nations of the universe there be found wicked men who covet the goods of others." It is clear that the heretic was as great a curiosity, if not a more truculent monster, than the buccaneer. Another lady of Panama was very curious to see the extraordinary animals called buccaneers, and the first time she had that happiness exclaimed aloud, "Jesu, bless me! These thieves are like unto us Spaniards." About a century before the storming of Panama, one powerful reason with the Spaniards for preventing the English from passing the Straits of Magellan was, to preserve the natives of the newly discovered Islands of the Pacific 'from the venom of their heresy.' The above quotation is from the "*History of the Buccaneers*," London, 1741.—W. N.

prisoner, and the wife of one of the principal merchants. She rejected his infamous addresses with firmness and spirit; and the buccaneer commander, alike a ruffian in his love and hate, used her with a severity that disgusted even those of his own gang, who had not thrown aside every feeling of manhood; and he was fain to charge his fair prisoner with treachery to excuse the baseness of the treatment she received by his orders. This alleged treachery consisted in corresponding with her countrymen, and endeavoring to effect her escape.

"In the meanwhile, a plan had entered the minds of a party of the buccaneers which did not suit the views nor meet the approbation of their leader. They had resolved to seize a ship in the port, cruise upon the South Sea on their own account, till satiated with booty, and then either establish themselves on some island, or return to Europe by the East Indies. Captain Morgan could neither spare equipments nor men for this project, of which he received private information. He immediately ordered the mainmast of the ship to be cut down and burnt, together with every other vessel in the port, thus effectually preventing desertion on this side of America. The arms, ammunition and stores secretly collected for this bold cruise on the South Sea were applied to other purposes.

"Nothing more was to be wrung forth from Panama, which, after a destructive sojourn of four weeks, Morgan resolved to leave. Beasts of burden were therefore collected from all quarters to convey the spoils to the opposite coast. The cannon were spiked, and scouts sent out to learn what measures had been taken by the governor of Panama to intercept the return to Chagre. The Spaniards were too much depressed to have made any preparation either to annoy or cut off the retreat of their inveterate enemies; and on the 24th of February, the buccaneers, apprehensive of no opposition, left the ruins of Panama with a hundred and seventy-five mules laden with their spoils and above six hundred prisoners, including women, children and slaves. The misery of these wretched captives, driven on in the midst of the

armed buccaneers, exceeds description. They believed that they were all to be carried to Jamaica, England, or some equally wild, distant, and savage country, to be sold for slaves; and the cruel craft of Morgan heightened these fears, the more readily to extort the ransom he demanded for the freedom of his unhappy prisoners. In vain the women threw themselves at his feet, supplicating for the mercy of being allowed to remain amid the ruins of their former homes, or in the woods and huts with their husbands and children. His answer was, that he came not here to listen to cries and lamentations, but to get money, which, unless he obtained, he would assuredly carry them all where they would little like to go. Three days were granted in which they might avail themselves of the conditions of ransom. Several were happy enough to be able to redeem themselves, or were rescued by the contributions sent in; and with the remaining captives, the pirates pushed onward, making new prisoners and gathering fresh spoils on their way.

"The conduct of Morgan at this time disproves many of the extravagant notions propagated about the high honor of the buccaneers in their dealings with each other. Halting at a convenient place for his purpose, in the midst of the wilderness, and about half way to Chagre, he drew up his comrades, and insisted that, besides taking an oath, declaring that all plunder had been surrendered to the common stock, each man should be searched, he himself submitting in the first place to the degrading scrutiny, though it was suspected that the leading motive of the whole manœuvre was the desire of concealing his own speculation and fraudulent dealing with his associates. The French buccaneers who accompanied the expedition, were indignant at treatment so much at variance with the maxims and usages of the gentlemen rovers; but being the weaker party, they were compelled to submit.

"The buccaneers and their prisoners performed the remainder of the journey by water, and when arrived at Chagre, Morgan, who knew not how to dispose of his un-

redeemed prisoners, shipped them all off for Porto Bello, making them the bearers of his demand of ransom from the governor of that city for the castle of Chagre. To this insolent message the governor of Porto Bello replied, that Morgan might make of the castle what he pleased; not a ducat should be given for its ransom.

"There was thus no immediate prospect of any more plunder in this quarter, and nothing remained to be done but to divide the spoils already acquired. The individual shares fell so far short of the expectations of the buccaneers, that they openly grumbled and accused their chief of the worst crime of which, in their eyes, he could be guilty,—secreting the richest of the jewels for himself. Two hundred pieces of eight to each man was thought a very small return for the plunder of so wealthy a city, and a very trifling reward for the toil and danger that had been undergone in assaulting it. Matters were assuming so serious an aspect among the fraternity that Morgan, who knew the temper of his friends, deemed it advisable to steal away with what he had obtained. He immediately ordered the walls of Chagre to be destroyed, carried the guns on board his own ship, and, followed by one or two vessels, commanded by persons in his confidence, sailed for Jamaica, leaving his enraged associates in want of every necessary. Those who followed him were all Englishmen, who, as the French buccaneers fully believed, connived at the frauds and shared in the gains of Morgan. They would instantly have pursued him to sea, and the Spaniards might have enjoyed the satisfaction of seeing the buccaneer fleet divided and fighting against itself, had they with a force so much weaker, dared to venture so unequal an encounter. The vessels deserted by Morgan separated. here and the companies sought their fortunes in different quarters, none of them much the richer for the misery and devastation they had carried to Panama."

\* \* \* \* \*

"Before quitting this part of the subject, it may be proper to notice the conclusion of the adventures of the

notorious Morgan. In the year which elapsed between the plunder of Panama and 1680, he had sufficient address and interest, or, more probably, skill in the appliance of his ill-gotten wealth, to obtain from Charles II. the honor of knighthood, and afterward to be appointed deputy-governor of Jamaica."

It is eminently satisfactory to know, that Morgan was pursued by fate, and to read that some of his old companions denounced him, and that "after the accession of James II. got him removed from his office, (deputy-governor of Jamaica, Capt. Sir Henry Morgan), and committed for a time to a prison in England."

The maxim of the buccaneers was, "No place beyond the line," and they were

"Linked to one virtue, and a thousand crimes." \*

---

\* Lives of Drake, Cavendish, et al., New York.



## CHAPTER XI.

EARLY HISTORY OF THE ISTHMUS, OR SANTA MARIA DE LA  
ANTIGUA DEL DARIEN—THE FIRST SEE IN AMERICA—  
MINAS DEL REY—OLD CANNON.

UNTIL recent times the Isthmus of Darien comprised that huge neck of land uniting South and Central America. It forms the southern part of the State of Panama, the State being the extreme northern end of South America. To-day what is considered Darien is some distance from Panama, and the narrowest part of the Isthmus extends from Colon to Panama. The early writers gave its breadth as eighteen Spanish leagues, and this is confirmed by modern surveys, which place it at some forty-seven miles.

I have already stated that Vasco Nufiez de Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean on the morning of September 26, 1513.\* Balboa was born in 1475 in the city of Xeres de los Cabelleros, in the Province of Estremadura, in Spain. He was of noble descent, intensely respectable, and correspondingly poor. The same conditions seem to obtain to-day outside of Spain. His first voyage was made in October, 1500, under Rodrigo de Bastides. With Bastides he coasted the Terra Firma, or Spanish Main, from Venezuela of to-day to the Isthmus of Darien, or nearly to Porto Bello. Balboa was a clear thinking, keen man; he made an excellent trader and was successful in his bargains with the Indians for gold and pearls. When the expedition under Bastides was about to return to Spain they found that their vessels were leaking, holes having been drilled in their sides by a worm called the *broma* in those days,—to-day is known as

---

\* "Voyages of Spanish Discovery," New York.

the *terredo navalis*. This destructive little creature I can best describe by saying, that he looks like a pale string of blanc-mange and is soft and gelatinous. His head is armed with such a sharp cutting apparatus, that he drills his way even into soft rocks, and his principal occupation seems to consist of cutting holes into woods, the hardest of which fails to resist him. Once domiciled in a piece of timber he makes a lining to his new home, which somewhat resembles a long, thin tube. The early Spaniards, whose vessels were destitute of copper, had great trouble with this pest of the South Seas. Many of the vessels of Columbus suffered from it. After a most difficult and dangerous passage, the ships of Bastides reached a small island off the coast of Hispaniola—or Spain the Less. To-day this is known as the island of Santo Domingo, or, to anglicize it, Saint Dominic.\* Off that island their worm-eaten vessels went to the bottom, but they saved the greater part of their valuable cargoes. To all readers of the early history of that time the name of Bobadilla will be familiar. He was governor of Santo Domingo at that time. News reached him that these Spaniards were trading in the island without his permission. This was considered a direct menace to his prerogatives. Hearing of the approach of the wrecked crews to Santo Domingo City, he ordered their arrest, and Bastides was sent to Spain as a prisoner. The ships of the fleet that accompanied the vessel carrying him, were all lost in a dreadful hurricane. His vessel reached Cadiz safely in September, 1502, and he was released by the government. It was Bobadilla who ordered the imprisonment of Columbus in the island of Santo Domingo. It was an iniquitous transaction. The old square Moorish tower where Columbus was imprisoned,—in fact, chained to the floor,—may be seen in the city of Santo Domingo, to this day. Balboa remained in Santo Domingo, where he tried his hand at farming, but at the end of a few years all that he had acquired during that successful

---

\* "Life of Columbus," New York.



trip to the Terra Firma, was gone, and he was in debt; and that, under Spanish law, meant a bondage almost worse than death. His early life as a soldier, and then as a sailor, had developed the usual spirit of unrest, and he wished to revisit the Terra Firma, but could not do so, as his creditors would have prevented his escape. His fertility of thought and great executive powers, were well illustrated in the ingenious way in which he gave his creditors the slip. "He placed himself in a cask and caused it to be carried from his farm (at Salvatierra on the sea-coast) on board a ship which was ready to sail to the coast of South America. When the ship was fairly out at sea Balboa appeared from his cask, much to the surprise of the captain, who was very angry, and told poor Balboa he would put him ashore on the first inhabited island he reached. But Balboa told the commander his story, and he became less angry, and agreed to let him continue with him.

"The part of the South American continent which lies along the Isthmus of Darien had been divided by King Ferdinand into two provinces, the boundary line of which was carried through the Gulf of Uraba. The eastern part, extending to Cape de la Vela, was called New Andalusia, and the government of it was given to Ojeada." . . . \*

The Spaniards at that time had an important settlement at Carthagena on the Spanish Main. This city lay somewhat to the south of the Isthmus of Darien, and it was Spain's stronghold in that part of the world. Ojeada, on the eastern side of the Gulf of Uraba, had founded a colony called by him San Sebastian. This was in New Andalusia. Balboa sent word to his friends in the Island of Hispaniola, and induced one of them, a wealthy lawyer, Bachelor Encisco, who had enriched himself practising there, to help him.

Bachelor Encisco sent word to his friend Balboa that he would supply funds for an expedition. He "immediately fitted out some vessels. And it was on board of

---

\* "Balboa, Cortes and Pizarro," New York.

one of these that Balboa had caused himself to be conveyed in a cask in the manner which has just been mentioned."

Bachelor Encisco's venture promised to be unsuccessful. It was "while he was thus desponding, Balboa, who had escaped in the cask from Hispaniola and had taken refuge on board his ship, came to him, and proposed that they should go to a place which he remembered having formerly visited on the western side of the Gulf of Uraba. He told Encisco that there was a pleasant Indian village, at the time he made his voyage with Bastides, which was called Darien by the natives. The country around, he said, was fruitful and abundant and was said to contain mines of gold."\*

This well timed advice of Balboa led to a settlement on the Isthmus, which Encisco named Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien. Balboa's good judgment and sound common sense led to instant recognition, and he played a most important rôle in the history of the settlement. His discovery of the Pacific is already familiar to my readers, who, if further interested in this remarkable man, will find ample material in any of the several authorities quoted by me. The whole thing reads like some charming tale from the Arabian Nights. His discovery of the Pacific led to the building of Panama. From that city his fellow discoverer, Pizarro, set sail on the 14th of November, 1524, and discovered Peru, one of the wealthiest countries in the world; and while Pizarro and Balboa were pushing their investigations, Cortes was doing noble work in Mexico.

The tales of wealth and pearls that reached the continent and spread all over Europe, inflamed all with the execrable *sed d'oro*, or the "cursed thirst for gold," as the Spanish called it. I may be permitted to remark at this point, as a physician, that it is an old time disease, and that it seems to be as acute now as then. We do not go at our neighbors with gunpowder and cutlass; we

---

\* "Balboa, Cortes and Pizarro," New York. See also "Voyages Spanish Discovery," New York.

fleece them quietly on the Stock Exchange and elsewhere, ours being a high phase of civilization. So disturbing were these rumors that Paterson started his scheme which led to the settlement in Darien, to which I have made reference, and which ended in such terrible disaster. It closed in the South Sea Bubble No. 1. Some four millions of pounds were invested in that, and so serious was the loss in those days that old England was threatened with bankruptcy, from which nothing but the enactment of special legislation saved it. Apropos of Paterson founding a colony in the Darien, it may interest some to know that M. de Lesseps, among his other concessions from the government of the United States of Colombia, has secured a tremendous slice of territory in that same Darien. Darien is noted for its woods, its poisonous snakes, and its dangerous fevers; it has a pestilential climate, and any attempt to colonize it with whites will be to consign them to death—but, as we know, M. de Lesseps is a famous Undertaker. In fact, parts of Darien are little better than a vast swamp.

The earliest church in the three Americas was erected in Darien, and it bore the name of Encisco's settlement, or Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien. It was the see of the first bishopric on this continent. Later the diocesan had his cathedral in Old Panama.

The Mines del Rey, or the mines of the king, were there in Darien. Spanish officials controlled them, while the work was done by the unfortunate Indians of the country, whose treatment at the hands of the Spaniards was marked by the grossest cruelty—in fact, barbarity—until that excellent old man, Las Casas, interfered in their behalf, and secured at least a few rights for them.

A few years ago a French exploring expedition, while in Darien, recovered several breech loading cannon; they were from the ruins of an old fort. One of these most interesting pieces was presented to Bishop Paul, and, thanks to his kindness, I had an opportunity of giving it a crucial examination. I wrote a descriptive

article on it that appeared in Panama in July, 1884.\* To me that old gun was most interesting. Finding a breech loader there, a gun certainly over two centuries old, greatly astonished me. It was of brass, a trifle over four feet long. Back of the muzzle rings, on a square was a large letter "R" (Rey—King); its mouth was three and one half inches across, and the trunnions were well back, and so placed as to give increased strength to the breech opening behind them. The gun gradually increased in thickness from its muzzle backwards; and from the trunnions to the cascabel, the thickness was an inch and a half. The breech block was not recovered with the gun. The breech was some four inches wide by six long, and the sides had been recessed to receive the breech block. The whole had been kept in position by a bar that passed through slots or openings in the sides of the breech. The gun was a substantial piece of artillery. Nearly three-fourths of its length were beyond the trunnions. It was sighted in the usual way, the foresight being just beyond the square section on which was the letter "R." The after-sight was also a straight line. To-day that historical piece, I presume, is in Santa Fé de Bogota, where Bishop Paul, late of Panama, presides over the interests of the Roman Catholic Church of Colombia, as Archbishop.

In closing this brief chapter on Darien, I would refer such of my readers as are familiar with Spanish, to Seis's "*Vida de Colon*," a work in three volumes, Barcelona, Spain. It is a mine of wealth on early day history, compiled from the old writers, such as Las Casas, Navarrette, "*Varones Ilustres*," "*Viajes De Vespucci*," and others. Seis's book is full of illustrations, and is of course trebly interesting to those who have visited the scenes that made the life of Columbus famous, in the mother country, on the Spanish Main, and in the West Indies.

Following the destruction of Old Panama, the governor cast about for a new site, and modern Panama

---

\* *Star and Herald*, Panama.

was built, with whose history and fortifications the reader is familiar. The modern city once was attacked by pirates, but they were defeated. In this attack, Captain Dampier, a historic character, took part. Dampier was an extraordinary man and thoroughly acquainted with navigation and astronomy, as it was understood in his time. I may state that his surveys of the Gulf of Panama, until a few years ago, were the best extant. Some surveys were made of the gulf while I was a resident of Panama, and they confirmed Dampier's early work detail for detail. Dampier was not of the blood-thirsty type of Morgan's crew, he was rather inclined to be a gentleman privateer; but it is quite true when one of his schemes failed, he joined the buccaneers in an expedition directed against the Carib section of the Spanish Main. In the "Lives and Voyages of Drake and Cavendish," p. 325, is the following: "In the *Gazette* for the 18th of April, 1703, it is stated that Captain Dampier, presented by His Royal Highness, the Lord High Admiral, had the honor of kissing her Majesty's (Queen Anne's) hand, before departing on a new voyage to the West Indies."

From the great mass of favorable testimony regarding Dampier I have taken the following:

"By French and Dutch navigators and men of science he has been uniformly regarded with the warmest admiration, as a man to whose professional eminence his own country has scarce done justice. They delight to style him 'the eminent,' 'the skilful,' 'the exact,' 'the incomprehensible,' Dampier. Humboldt has borne testimony to his merits, placing the buccaneer seaman before those men of science, who afterwards went over the same ground; Maltebrun terms him 'the learned Dampier,' and the author of the 'Voyage to Australia,' inquires, '*Mais où trouvé-t-on des navigateurs comparables à Dampier?*' The acuteness, accuracy and clearness of his nautical observations, of his descriptions and general remarks, have made his voyages be assumed by foreign navigators as unerring guides and authorities in all subsequent expeditions; and his rapid-

ity and power of observation are fully as remarkable as his accuracy.

"When and where this remarkable man died no one knows, but it was his fate to sink unheeded among the conflicting waves and tides of society, and no memorial or tradition remains of his death, in whose remarkable life the adventures of Selkirk, Wafer and the buccaneer commanders of the South Sea appear but as episodes. So much for human fame."

Of Dampier one can read at least with some satisfaction; but of that blood-thirsty scoundrel, Morgan, with nothing but contempt and loathing.